

# Press release

**Date:** Wednesday 19 January 2022

**Images:** Downloadable from [HERE](#)

## ***The World We Live In: Art and the Urban Environment* explores city life in a new Arts Council Collection touring exhibition**



IMAGE CREDITS IN 'NOTES TO EDITORS'

Arts Council Collection presents ***The World We Live In: Art and the Urban Environment***, an exhibition of painting, sculpture, photography and film that explores urban life. Featuring 29 works created between 1950 and 2020, as well as photographs from the Collection's rich archive of documentary photography, the exhibition launches at Leicester Museums & Art Galleries in February 2022 (5 February - 2 May 2022) before touring to other venues across the UK.

Cities around the world have developed and diversified more rapidly in the last ten years than ever before and today over half of the world's population lives in an urban environment. The many facets of urban life - architecture, migration, commuting, crowds, noise, lights - have long been a rich source of inspiration to artists. *The World We Live In*, which takes its title from an artwork by **Carel Weight**, brings together twentieth century and contemporary works to explore these issues, while offering a space to contemplate the role of the city, especially in light of events of the last two years.

Exploring themes from urban development – such as in works by **Victor Pasmore** and **Toby Paterson** – to migration and the relationship between inner cities and suburbia, the artists presented in this exhibition respond to a variety of places across the world. **George Shaw's** *The End of Time* depicts the area of Coventry where he grew up, while **Melanie Smith's** *Parres* shows the de-personalised outskirts of Mexico City, the place she has lived and worked in since 1989.

The sensory experience of living in urban environments is also addressed in the exhibition, with works such as **Michael Andrews' Lights II: The Ship Engulfed** depicting glittering

cityscapes and neon signs and **Rut Blees Luxemburg's** *Meet Me in Arcadia* capturing the artificial lights from a block of East End London flats. A changing schedule of sound and video works, selected by each touring venue, includes **Lawrence Abu Hamdan's** *The All-Hearing*, a film reflecting on the high levels of noise pollution in Cairo, Egypt.

While some artists have sought inspiration from real life surroundings, others have drawn on failed utopias of the past and imagined structures for the future, opening up conversation about how cities have served and failed the needs of their inhabitants. **Mark Lewis's** film *Children's Games, Heygate Estate*, highlights the gap between utopian views and everyday realities as his camera glides around a complex of empty walkways in a now demolished South London estate.

Alongside the exhibition's broad range of works, *The World We Live In* also includes some of the Arts Council Collection's outstanding collection of documentary photographs from the 1960s and 1970s which present an unparalleled view of inner city life across the UK.

**Deborah Smith, Director, Arts Council Collection, says:** *"We look forward to working with our touring partners on this exhibition in which artists bring many different ways of looking at our urban environment and, through art, raise questions and encourage people to keep interrogating the world we live in".*

Established in 1946 as a national collection for the UK, today the Arts Council Collection cares for over 8,000 works by close to 2,200 artists. The Collection is managed by the Southbank Centre on behalf of Arts Council England, and is committed to supporting artists from a wide range of backgrounds and disciplines, most often at an early stage of their career, in order to reflect the rich, diverse culture of the UK. It is a widely circulated national collection that can be seen in museums, galleries, schools, universities, hospitals and charitable associations across the UK and abroad.

For more information about *The World We Live In: Art and the Urban Environment*, visit the Arts Council Collection's website [here](#).

**For press enquiries about the Arts Council Collection please contact:**

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Tour dates:**

5 February - 2 May 2022, Leicester Museums & Art Galleries

21 May - 4 September 2022, Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery

18 September 2022 - 1 January 2023, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery

## Image Credits

From left: David Austen, *City*, 1999, oil on canvas, 167.5 x 152cm. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist; Rut Blees Luxemburg, *Meet Me in Arcadia*, 1996, c-print mounted on aluminium, 61 x 76cm. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist; Suzanne Treister, *Barcelona in Outer Space*, 1986, oil on canvas, 25.4 x 25.5cm. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © the artist.

## Arts Council Collection

Arts Council Collection is a national collection of modern and contemporary British art. We are committed to supporting artists from a range of backgrounds and disciplines, most often at an early stage of their careers. From multi-part installations to performance, painting and moving image, the works that enter the Collection are representative of the best and most ambitious art made in the UK. We bring art to every corner of the country through loans to museums, galleries, schools, hospitals and other public institutions and through our learning programmes and touring exhibitions.

Arts Council Collection was founded in 1946 and is managed by the Southbank Centre, London, on behalf of Arts Council England. [www.artscouncilcollection.org.uk](http://www.artscouncilcollection.org.uk)

## Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. By 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high quality cultural experiences. Between 2018 and 2022, we will invest £1.45 billion of public money from the government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help deliver this vision. [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

Following the Covid-19 crisis, Arts Council England has developed a £160 million emergency response package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. Find out more at [www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19)

## The Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre occupying a prominent riverside location that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. We exist to present great cultural experiences that bring people together and we achieve this by providing the space for artists to create and present their best work and by creating a place where as many people as possible can come together to experience bold, unusual and eye-opening work. We want to take people out of the everyday, every day.

The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as being home to the National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. It is also home to four Resident Orchestras (London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Sinfonietta and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment) and four Associate Orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra and National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain).



**Arts Council  
Collection**

**SOUTHBANK  
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